

Corps releases Missouri River 2004 Annual Operating Plan, Final Environmental Impact Statement, and Draft Revised Master Manual

The Army Corps of Engineers has released for public comment its Final Environmental Impact Statement for the operation of the Missouri River dams and reservoirs. Also released were the Draft Revised Master Water Control Manual and the Draft Final 2004 Annual Operating Plan. The Master Manual sets forth the guidelines for the operation of the Corps' six main stem dams on the Missouri River.

The Corps will accept comments on the Final Environmental Impact Statement between March 5 and March 19. Comments will be accepted in writing and via e-mail. Written comments should be sent to: Master Manual Project Manager, Northwestern Division, 12565 West Center Road, Omaha, NE 68144. E-mail comments should go to: mastermanual@usace.army.mil

"We believe the preferred alternative in this Final Environmental Impact Statement and water control plan in the Revised Master Manual is the best balance for serving the multiple purposes of the reservoir system as authorized by Congress, meets the Corps' trust and treaty obligations to federally recognized Tribes, and complies with the environmental laws, including the National Environmental Policy Act and Endangered Species Act," Brigadier General William Grisoli, Northwestern Division Engineer, said.

"The release of these documents today brings us one step closer to completion of a long-range program for the operation of the Missouri River," said Brig. Gen. Grisoli. "We must maintain our flexibility to meet all of the congressionally authorized purposes while complying with the Endangered Species Act.

"Our immediate goal is to work with U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to develop the amount of species habitat that will allow this year's operation for minimum navigation service and provide for other uses such as water supply, water quality, and recreation" said Brig. Gen. Grisoli. "In addition, this basin has been subjected to two serious droughts since 1967. In our revised plans, we are recommending conservation measures to better conserve water early in a drought, resulting in reduced impacts to the public."

"The goal of the Corps of Engineers is to improve the survival of species, provide predictability to the basin, and lessen the impact of severe drought by retaining more water in the reservoirs," Brig. Gen. Grisoli added.

The Final Environmental Impact Statement and the Draft Revised Master Manual describe new drought conservation measures that save water in the reservoirs earlier in a drought than under the current plan and unbalances storage in the three biggest reservoirs to benefit both endangered species and game fish. Also proposed is a comprehensive set of measures to help recover protected species,

provide predictability for river operation and allow the Corps to meet the Congressionally authorized purposes of flood control, hydropower, water supply, water quality, irrigation, navigation, recreation, and fish and wildlife.

The preferred alternative and comprehensive recovery plan embrace prudent operational changes based on existing sound scientific and engineering principles and practices, comprehensive monitoring and evaluation, and adaptive management initiatives involving basin stakeholders.

All the documents related to the Final Environmental Impact Statement, draft Master Water Control Manual and the draft of the Final 2004 Annual Operating Plan based on the new Master Manual are available on the Northwestern Division website at: <http://www.nwd-mr.usace.army.mil/rcc/index.html>